

Maine Forest Legacy Committee
Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, May 21, 2014; 9:00 a.m. – 12:00 a.m.
Harlow Building, 1st Floor Conference Room, 18 Elkins Lane, Augusta

Committee members present: Cheryl Timberlake, Sarah Demers, Sam Morris, Kathy Eickenberg, Catherine Robbins, Alan Hutchinson, David Allen, Don Mansius.

Committee members absent: Wolfe Tone, Everett Deschenes.

Others Present: Neal Bungard (FLP NA), Diano Circo (TPL), David Rodrigues (DACF), Ed Meadows (DACF), Tom Rumpf (TNC), Jym St. Pierre (RESTORE: The North Woods), Wade Simmons (MNAP), Tom Boutereira (TCF), Jo D. Saffair (Consultant).

I. Approval of 9/13/13 Minutes: The minutes of the September 13, 2013 Forest Legacy Committee meeting were approved.

II. FLP Federal Update: Neal noted that the final FY'14 funded project list was issued in March and totaled \$50.96 million in funding. The FY'14 list included \$6 million in funding for Cold Stream Forest and \$500,000 in funding for Moosehead-Seboomook Inholding. The President's FY'15 FLP budget includes \$100 million in funding requests, significantly higher than the amount awarded in FY'14. Maine's two FY'15 projects, Gulf Hagas Whitecap and Big Six Forest, are ranked #10 and #32 respectively. It is unlikely that Big Six Forest will be funded as this would require a Program allocation of approximately \$79 million. Neal indicated that the National Review Panel did not think a compelling enough case was made of the conversion threat to Big Six Forest. Both Senators Collins and King have sent letters urging support of FLP funding sufficient to fund both Maine projects.

Neal indicated that the Land and Water Conservation Fund which is the funding mechanism for the Forest Legacy Program is up for reauthorization in 2015. A coalition of conservation organizations is working to build support for the reauthorization.

It was noted that the FLP Implementation Guidelines have been redrafted and are currently under initial review by State Forest Legacy Program managers; this process will continue through July. After further changes are made in response to this first round of comments, the document will be made available for public comment. Maine continues to voice its concern over the growing number of circumstances in which Forest Service consultation is indicated within the Implementation Guidelines, resulting in decreased flexibility for states to manage the program in response to unique regional or state circumstances.

III. Funded Project Updates:

A.&B. FY'08 – Lower Penobscot Forest-Great Pond and FY'09 – Machias III-Washington Bald – After years of effort, these projects are unfortunately being closed out without acquisition. Tom Rumpf of The Nature Conservancy noted that ultimately the landowner withdrew the parcels from consideration, expressing concern that it had not been treated fairly through the process. The match requirements are being met for the other portions of these two projects.

C. FY'12 – High Peaks - Orbeton Stream – The appraisal for this parcel has just been received, and the project is slated to close in August after obtaining approval from the Land for Maine's Future Program. Diano was commended for navigating the extinguishing of the parcel's mineral rights. A celebration will likely be held this summer with Congressional delegation participation.

D. FY'13 – East Grand - Orient – The title and survey should be completed in two weeks at which point the appraisal process can begin. Closing is anticipated in 2014.

E. FY'14 – Moosehead-Seboomook Inholding – Funding has been approved for this project and the State will soon be entering into a grant agreement with the Forest Service. Maine's land conservation partner on this project, the Forest Society of Maine, calculated that the value of the 2-acre island included in the original application as match is in fact not needed to meet the project's match requirements. The State requested that the Forest Legacy Committee approve the removal of the island from the project. The Committee issued unanimous support for the island's removal from the project, and requested that the Forest Society of Maine issue a letter to the State indicating that if and when the island is sold, it be held subject to deed restrictions that prohibit development and that guarantee permanent public day use access.

F. FY'14 – Cold Stream Forest – Once the Governor's office signs off on this project, the Bureau will enter into a grant agreement with the Forest Service.

IV. FY'16 Proposed Project Presentations by Partners

A. East Grand Phase II – Weston (TCF) – This 4,504-acre project consists of two parcels to be protected through conservation easement: Million Dollar View (3,523 acres) and Meetinghouse Point (981 acres), both in the town of Weston. The project is part of the larger 12,021-acre East Grand Watershed Initiative, the first phase of which received \$1.8 million in FLP funding in FY'13. The Weston lands abut the Phase I lands in the Town of Orient, and have multiple natural resource values including well managed timberland, significant lake frontage, deer wintering areas, recreational opportunities, and habitat connectivity for a suite of wildlife species. The lands are dual certified under SFI and FSC. The Conservation Fund is also working on several community projects that while not essential for a Forest Legacy application, are building upon the parcels' assets and contributing to the community's vitality. A Weston town meeting will be held in July or August to confirm community support for the application.

B. Bix Six Forest (TPL) – This project was submitted in FY'15 and will be resubmitted for FY'16. This 23,000-acre parcel to be protected through conservation easement is located in Big Six Twp. The 5,000-acre sugarbush located on the property produces 28% of Maine's maple syrup production, generating \$3.4 million in product revenue annually. This is more volume than the entire State of NH, or MA and CT combined produce. The property is located in an area mapped as highly resilient to climate change and the entire property is critical habitat for Canada lynx. It abuts over 2 million acres of protected land. The St. Aurelie border checkpoint is just north of the property. In the resubmission, TPL will focus on strengthening the threatened section. Suggestions included adding in more information regarding camps in Maine

owned by Canadians, and including a regional map with the relative size of the local population to emphasize the dense population directly to the north.

- C. Perham Stream (TPL) – This parcel, to be protected through conservation easement, consists of 6,429 acres that abut the Orbeton FLP project, BPL’s Mount Abraham ecological reserve, and 1.5 miles of the Appalachian Trail. The project includes 7 miles of frontage on Perham Stream which is actively used by salmon; this stream is the focus of Atlantic Salmon restoration work centered on restoring the Kennebec River fisheries. The property contains high elevation acreage that is habitat for the Bicknell’s Thrush, and also supports an abundant population of moose. It is anticipated that both snowmobile and ATV use will be maintained as allowable uses. TPL is exploring using a new potential funding source - the U.S. Navy Readiness and Environmental Protection Initiative (REPI)- that is used to acquire lands within close proximity to a naval property.

V. FY’16 Scoring Subcommittee and Process

The following Committee members agreed to serve on the FY16 Scoring Subcommittee:

Sarah Demers, Chair
Alan Hutchinson
Don Mansius
Sam Morris

The Subcommittee will review the FY’16 proposed projects; meet in late June to discuss what new information would be helpful to receive; and will score each project preliminarily. These preliminary scores will not be shared with land conservation partners, as the Subcommittee’s focus is instead to help partners produce the best possible applications for Maine. Jo D. will prepare letters requesting the additional information identified, and the Subcommittee will further review and adjust scores accordingly. Prior to the full Forest Legacy Committee meeting in early September, Jo D. will prepare a summary report to the full Committee.

VI. Next Meeting: tentative timing and agenda

The next meeting will be held during the first or second week of September, primarily to establish the projects that will be forwarded for national consideration for FY’16.

Respectfully submitted,

Jo D. Saffair